

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5835

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0922

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, NU

SUBJECT: CONTINUING DISORDERS IN MASAYA

SUMMARY: FOR THE FOURTH CONSECUTIVE NIGHT SERIOUS DISTURBANCES CONTINUED FEB. 23 IN THE MONIMBO DISTRICT IN THE CITY OF MASAYA.

ARMED ANTI-GOVERNMENT MILITANTS HAVE BEEN LARGELY UNCHECK IN ATTACKING HOUSES OF GON SUPPORTERS AND OFFICIALS. NATIONAL GUARD (GN) TROOPS HAVE BEEN STATIONED AROUND MONIMBO BUT HAVE MADE ONLY INTERMITTANT ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN THE DISTRICT. END SUMMARY

1. THE CURRENT DISTURBANCES BEGAN MONDAY, FEB. 20, WHEN GN TROOPS REPORTEDLY LOBBED TEAR GAS GRENADES AT A CROWD LEAVING A CHURCH WHERE A MASS FOR PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO HAD BEEN HELD. ANGRY CROWDS LATER DEMONSTRATED AND BURNED A VEHICLE AND A LOCAL MOVIE THEATER. THE VIOLENCE CONTINUED FEB 21, WHEN ACCORDING TO THE OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER LA PRENSA, TWO GN HELICOPTERS DROPPED OVER FIFTY TEAR GAS GRENADES IN MONIMBO. ACCORDING TO THE NEWSPAPER, FIVE PERSONS WERE HOPSITALIZED AND OVER ONE HUNDRED RECEIVED MEDICAL ATTENTION AS A RESULT OF THE

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TEAR GAS, BUT EMBASSY HAS NO INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION OF THESE FIGURES.

IN TURN, ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATORS BURNED THE HOUSE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES AND TWO AUTOMOBILES. FIGHTING BETWEEN DEMONSTRATORS AND GN BROKE OUT IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF MONIMBO THE NIGHT OF FEB. 22-23. THREE GUARDSMEN AND AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF DEMONSTRATORS WERE REPORTED WOUNDED. ONLY ONE

OR TWO CIVILIANS WOUNDED ARE KNOWN TO THE RED CROSS BUT IT IS RUMORED THAT A NUMBER OF WOUNDED DID NOT REPORT FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT BECAUSE THEY FEARED BEING PICKED UP BY THE AUTHORITIES. ONE OF THE WOUNDED BEING TAKEN IN A RED CROSS AMBULANCE TO THE HOSPITAL WAS STOPPED BY THE GN AND THE PATIENT WAS INTERROGATED IN THE AMBULANCE. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT GN AUTHORITIES TOLD RED CROSS OFFICIALS THAT THIS WAS A MISTAKE AND WOULD NOT BE REPEATED. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE MASAYA GN COMMANDER WAS RELIEVED OF HIS COMMAND REPORTEDLY FOR NOT HAVING EXERCISED GOOD JUDGMENT ON THIS AND OTHER MATTERS. THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF DEATHS BUT THEY HAVE BEEN RUMORED.

3. THE NIGHT OF FEB 23 ONE FURTHER HOUSE WAS BURNED. AS OF FEB 24 THE GN HAS NOT MOVED INTO MONIMBO TO ESTABLISH CONTROL. ATTEMPTS AT MEDIATION BY MASAYA OPPOSITION LEADERS HAVE NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

4. DURING SORTIES INTO THE AREA GN JEEPS AND TRUCKS HAVE CONFRONTED BARRICADES IN THE STREETS, HOMEMADE PIPE AND FRAGMENTATION BOMBS AND MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AS WELL AS SHOWERS OF STONES AND SOME SNIPER FIRE. THE GN HAS EMPLOYED TEAR GAS (ONE CANISTER PROMINENTLY PICTURED IN LA PRENSA WAS OF ARGENTINE MANUFACTURE) AND SMALL ARMS FIRE.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THERE HAVE BEEN ANTI-SOMOZA DEMONSTRATIONS IN MONIMBO AND MASAYA SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF CHAMORRO ON JANUARY 10 BUT THAT IT HAS ONLY BEEN IN THE LAST FOUR DAYS THAT IT HAS REACHED SEMI-INSURRECTIONARY PROPORTIONS. THE MONIMBO DISTRICT IS POOR AND ITS RESIDENTS ARE PRIMARILY INDIANS. EMBASSY FURTHER
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UNDERSTANDS THAT THE PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN INCITING THE RESIDENTS ARE PRIMARILY YOUTH WHO HAVE ALSO BEEN STOPPING NON-RESIDENTS IN AND AROUND THE AREA AND REQUESTING MONEY FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THE ACTIVISTS ARE STUDENTS OR SANDINISTA REVOLUTIONARIES, BUT THERE ARE REPORTS OF FSLN FLAGS AND CHANTS AND PROPAGANDA BEING IN EVIDENCE DURING THE DEMONSTRATIONS. THIS ACTIVITY IN MONIMBO MAY PREVIEW ATTEMPTS TO FOMENT SIMILAR ACTIVITIES IN OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY PARTICULARLY IN POOR SUBURBS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE NOT MANY OTHER SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES WITH THE ETHNIC CHARACTERISTICS OF MONIMBO. THE ACTION OF THE GN TO AVOID AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE DEMONSTRATORS HAS LEFT GN AUTHORITIES AND SUPPORTERS AND THEIR PROPERTY EXPOSED AS TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR THE RIOTERS.
RUBENSTEIN

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